SHELTER OR HOMES?

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

A Progress Report

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by
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and
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Table of Contents

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
HOMELESSNESS	5
THE HOMELESS	8
SHELTER AND HOUSING NEEDS	10
SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS	14

Homelessness is not simply the lack of stable shelter; it is a life in disarray. The homeless person's existence is a public existence - there is no privacy.

- Alternative Housing Subcommittee for the City of Toronto, 1985

PREFACE

The government of Canada, in co-operation with the provinces, the housing industry and public interest groups, is committed throughout 1987, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH), to focus attention on the national and international plight of the homeless. Through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada is supporting many and diverse projects alleviating the most pressing shelter needs of the homeless in more than 40 countries. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Canada's national housing agency, on the other hand is supporting a wide range of initiatives to identify and research the best means of improving the living conditions of the homeless in Canada.

Among these initiatives and as an integral part of preparing for Canada's participation in IYSH, the Centre for Human Settlements at the University of British Columbia was asked to convene two Invitational Seminars to provide a basic analysis of the scope and scale of homelessness in Canada, reflecting a broad spectrum of academic and professional advice. In addition, the Centre was asked to identify and select solutions to homelessness in Canada which demonstrate a variety of successful approaches based on regional differences and differing public and private resources. The present report is a synopsis of a continuing study and a progress report on the nature and causes of homelessness in Canada, and on selected successful solutions in four cities.

These examples will serve as a basis for defining criteria for the selection of Canadian demonstration projects within the framework and project guidelines established by the UN Commission on Human Settlements (UNCHS) as they might apply to Canadian circumstances. These criteria and the selection of successful innovative solutions, require answers to the questions: - who are the homeless? why are they homeless? what are their needs? and how can they be met? - by the co-operative and joint enterprise of public and private initiatives.

Analysis of homelessness in Canada indicates that while it is a pervasive phenomenon, particularly visible in the major metropolitan areas, it is subject to public policy resolution and substantive improvement through public and private resources. Only a partnership of six related groups will provide practical solutions, by focussing on the needs of the homeless which include shelter as well as social and economic support services so as to achieve the major goal, namely, to provide the basis for effective return and participation in the mainstream of Canadian society of individuals and families who have been made homeless by economic, health, and/or social circumstances beyond their control.

The six-group partnership must include:

(a) the homeless themselves, to identify needs, expectations and aspirations;

(b) the volunteer and local charitable organizations with extensive pioneer experience in providing shelter and urgent health and food services for the poor;

(c) private industry providing investment, contracting and building services;

(d) the municipalities and local governments who influence location and availability of land and buildings for housing projects, while being responsible for establishing norms and regulations through local by-laws and ordinances;

(e) the provinces and their agencies who have the Canadian constitutional jurisdiction for housing and social services. The provinces represent a major source of policy initiatives and the critical opportunity for co-ordinating the delivery of health and social services to the homeless in relation to shelter provision and appropriate accommodation;

(f) the federal government is, through its taxation power, able to raise and allocate appropriate resources to housing and social service programmes including social housing on a national basis.

This progress report will be followed by a complete study on the nature of homelessness in Canada and the presentation of a range of successful and innovative solutions, including housing projects, as well as local and regional programmes, presented on a comparative basis to the Eleventh session of the UN Commission on Human Settlements in 1988.

INTRODUCTION

It has been more than ten years since the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat '76) met in Vancouver, and proclaimed the international community's commitment to decent living and housing conditions for human beings everywhere. While much has been achieved in those ten years to improve the shelter conditions for some, and advancing the cause of human settlements development strategies generally, the concrete goal of adequate shelter for all everywhere remains elusive. The effects of the dual processes of population growth and rapid urbanization suggest the urgent need for fundamentally new concepts of managing settlements and providing affordable, quality shelter and services within the context of an exponentially growing need of gainful employment and public financial constraint.

In the decade since Habitat '76, shelter and human settlements programmes have made positive contributions to national social and economic development. Appropriate shelter satisfies a basic human need, it represents a major contribution to health and social development and provides employment and vital economic activity. It represents a visible manifestation of a complex of physical and socio-economic factors which influence human settlements and related regional development. Accordingly, addressing homelessness, and the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, requires a structured response to a wide range of issues including guaranteed access to land, security of tenure in affordable and adequate housing, primary health care, as well as ready access to infrastructure, basic services, education,

training and above all, employment. In this regard, Canada is no exception.

Resolving homelessness in Canada must be seen within the context of the country's federally constituted system of government, comprising ten provinces and two federal territories. Settlement policy and the strategic growth of settlements in relation to economic and social development are a provincial responsibility under Canada's constitution, with the federal government providing selected programme support and developmental incentives. Canada's economy is a mixed market economy within which settlement investments and expenditures usually are made by private enterprise with infrastructure support by local and provincial governments, often with substantive assistance from voluntary and charitable organizations. The vitality and resilience of the contemporary Canadian settlement system are intimately linked to regional, provincial and national economic development strategies, in which public policy responsibility for the growth and development of settlements rests with the provincial governments, while the mixed market economy creates the setting for a public/private partnership. Understanding the relative nature of homelessness in Canada therefore, requires a detailed analysis of the particular roles played by all levels of government, and the private and voluntary sectors, both in terms of identifying the causes of the problems and in searching for effective solutions based on harnessing necessary resources.

The Federal government, in co-operation with the Provinces, the housing industry and public interest groups is committed throughout 1987, the

International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH), to focus attention on the national and international need for shelter for the homeless. Through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada is supporting many and diverse projects alleviating the most pressing shelter needs of the homeless in more than 40 countries. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Canada's national housing agency, on the other hand is supporting a wide range of initiatives to identify and research the best means of improving the living conditions of the homeless in Canada.

Canada has a rich and accomplished history of providing decent shelter for her citizens. Through a process of public consultation and dialogue between the appropriate levels of government, the private, and the voluntary sectors, a search has been started to improve and increase the delivery of shelter to the homeless, to co-ordinate actions toward creating an environment in which the non-governmental sector can operate with greater certainty while governments discharge their social and economic responsibilities.

In 1985, a new social housing policy was established through which all available social housing funds are being directed to those most in need. Social housing involves programme grants, loans and subsidies designed to create appropriate housing at costs affordable to the lowest income groups. These include many of the private and non-governmental IYSH projects funded by the federal government. During 1987, the federal government and the provinces will fund the construction and rehabilitation of 20,000 additional housing units for needy Canadians. This will result in a total of 425,000 social housing units in Canada, an indication of national commitment, and the willingness to address the needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

In 1985 alone, 1,781 new hostel beds were provided and $21 million spent to repair existing rooming houses.

As an integral part of preparing for Canada's participation in IYSH, the Centre for Human Settlements at the University of British Columbia has convened two Invitational Seminars to provide an ongoing analysis of the scope and scale of homelessness in Canada, at which a broad spectrum of academic and professional advice was sought. The seminars yielded careful analysis and wide-ranging discussions between the participants. A comprehensive review of current literature, together with academic and professional presentations based on operational experience, laid the foundations for a full documentation of the scale and scope of homelessness in Canada and allowed for the identification of examples of successful solutions to housing the homeless as a contribution to Canada's programme for IYSH '87.

Three principal findings have emerged from the first phase of the analysis of Canadian issues. They relate to the relative nature of homelessness, the social and economic diversity of the homeless, and to the indications based on reviews of current projects, that while the problems in Canada are pervasive and complex, they can be solved through the implementation of a structured response involving a partnership of public and private resources.

HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness in Canada is a pervasive and prevailing c_ndition, the result of a complex of problems which are affecting an increasingly broad spectrum of the community. It appears to be a predominantly urban centred, socio-economic and physical shelter problem deeply rooted in economic disparities across the country. Although it is a phenomenon difficult to define and measure accurately, it is evident that homelessness involves more than simply the presence or absence of shelter. The search for the nature and scale of homelessness in Canada rests on the definitional problems surrounding the issue of who is homeless and why. This raises the following questions: is homelessness an issue of poverty? or employment? of housing? or health? of social security? or income distribution? is it an issue of discrimination? or of location? of education? or is it primarily an issue of measurement?

Varied evidence increasingly points to the answer: it is all of these factors and more; no single causal factor can be used to define homelessness exclusively or successfully. In certain regions of the country the problem is chronic, while in others it is episodic, but evidence indicates that homelessness in Canada is responsive to public policy, of which a shelter component is a vital, but by no means exclusive part. And it is not exclusively a matter of government. The viability of systematic and cost-effective strategies to alleviate problems of urban poverty and homelessness rests with the willingness and ability of the public and private sectors to co-ordinate their efforts and to work co-operatively.

Conceptually, homelessness in Canada results from the confluence of social, economic, political and physical factors. Since it is inextricably linked to the combined effects of poverty, inadequate income, inaffordable or substandard housing, lack of meaningful employment opportunities, inadequate social benefits, deinstitutionalization, urban change and the differential standards which society seems to be willing to tolerate for some of its members, explanation of the causes, and by implication, the selection of practical solutions, requires comprehensive, multi-dimensional analyses which go beyond single factor causal explanations.

In Canada, the causes of homelessness are as diverse as the homeless themselves, and must be seen within the context of the federally constituted national settlement system. Recent evidence suggests that the causes of homelessness in Canada are varied, changing over time and from city to city. Nevertheless, there are some common elements:

(1) Chronic, temporary or seasonal unemployment, creating cyclical or continuing poverty;

(2) mental and/or physical illness, often reflecting provincial policies of deinstitutionalizating psychiatric and medical patients into communities without appropriate facilities or programmes;

(3) lack of appropriate and affordable housing in areas close to employment, often aggravated by reduction or demolition of existing housing stock;

(4) increased influx of native population into major cities, especially in

Western Canada, in search of jobs and better living conditions. Lack of skills and preparation for urban life, places this group at high risk of homelessness.

As a result of the various causes of homelessness, there are across the country, to varying degrees, people with no physical shelter, increasing numbers relying on emergency shelter for sustained periods, people living in inappropriate or substandard dwellings for which they are paying in excess of 30% of their income, and those whose housing security and stability is highly susceptible to changes in local housing and social welfare policies. Within this continuum are found increasing numbers of young people, particularly children, women and single-parent families. Consequently, based on the relative nature of homelessness and bearing in mind its diverse causes, homelessness in Canada is the absence of a continuing or permanent <u>home</u> over which individuals or family groups have personal control and which provides the essential needs of shelter, privacy and security at an affordable cost, together with ready access to social and economic public services.

THE HOMELESS

The homeless in Canada are not a homogeneous group. The traditional stereotype of the indigent vagrant who has opted out of society and into a bottle is a misleading caricature which can no longer be accepted. People from all walks of life, of all ages, and with vastly different experiences are losing their capacity to exercise choice and control over their environment. Although they are becoming more visible, they are nevertheless often overlooked by the majority.

They can be elderly or children, single or in families, economically disenfranchised (the poor, chronically or temporarily unemployed and underemployed), or socially marginalized (the mentally ill, physically disabled and chronically ill). Many of them, before they were homeless, were people more or less like ourselves. What now separates them is not so much the presence or absence of shelter, but the lack of a home.

They can be divided into two groups: the absolute homeless who inhabit the streets by day and either seek refuge at night in emergency shelters or who sleep outside, hiding from the elements and society; and those whose tenuous hold on economic and social stability place them 'at risk' of becoming homeless. The former are few in number, the latter substantial and growing rapidly.

It is also evident that not all regions of the country experience homelessness to the same extent, and that there are spatial and temporal variations in the incidence and prevalence of the homeless. Social 'safety nets' established by agencies and institutions across the country have had varying degrees of success in keeping the problem from becoming worse than it is at present.

While there are several critical factors contributing to homelessness, affordability of shelter clearly is a key issue. The gap between shelter costs and ability to pay widens as income decreases; the lower the individual or family income the higher its proportion devoted to housing. The young, often under- or unemployed, and the old on fixed income are especially at risk of having to devote a disproportionate amount of their income to shelter or indeed become homeless.

SHELTER AND HOUSING NEEDS

There is a growing consensus that homelessness in Canada is attributable in part to the organization of the housing market. Evidence suggests that there are increasing numbers of people who require low rent, permanent and secure accommodation at a time when the stock of appropriate types of affordable housing is diminishing. The economic recessions of the 1980's have decimated the low cost end of the housing supply in most metropolitan areas in Canada and drastically increased rates of chronic and temporary unemployment.

In the absence of stable income and security of tenure, many individuals and families have been displaced from the economic system, while many young people have not had the opportunity to become involved productively. For them, homelessness, or the risk of becoming homeless has become an economic reality, and many are unprepared to cope. In addition, the policies established during the 1960's to reduce the number of people confined to provincial psychiatric institutions proceeded without the necessary corresponding increase to community support services. Surveys across the country indicate that the unintended effects of deinstitutionalization have contributed significantly to the scope and scale of homelessness in Canada's major cities.

Within the Canadian context, housing is a vital element in both economic and social policy, but since sizeable numbers of people remain unable to afford decent shelter, the debate as to whether housing assistance by governments is sufficiently focussed on those most in need remains unresolved. Canadians still have unmet housing needs, and sizeable numbers

of people remain at risk of homelessness.

Recent reviews of shelter options available to the homeless and poor (including emergency shelters, rooming houses, dormitories, hostels and others) reveal that as the more secure and affordable alternatives disappear, the range of 'inappropriate' shelter options are by default becoming permanent quarters for some (abandoned buildings, public spaces, residential health care facilities, emergency shelters and hostels). None of these options constitutes an adequate response to a person's need for a "home". They reinforce and perpetuate homelessness and do little to address the conflict inherent in the structure of the economy which pits the needs of the poor or unemployed against the marketplace within a very diverse and fragmented public support system which differs from province to province.

An assessment of the causes and effects of homelessness in Canada indicates that its persistence can be traced in part to structural problems in the organization of the mixed market economy, to the lack of preventive and therapeutic services, and declining income support. It is also a function of the available housing stock and of the organization of the housing market. Analyses of regional economic trends show that homelessness is an increasing problem across Canada, and seems to be affected by a number of contributing factors interacting with each other. These include a decline in the affordable rental stock (particularly in centrally located areas), low vacancy rates in the rental markets, chronic regional unemployment, local poverty, inadequate incomes and social assistance supports for the poor, and a social 'safety net' which is being strained to the limit. These multiple

contributing causes require multi-faceted responses to achieve practical solutions. Recent analysis of the scope and scale of social and economic deprivations across urban Canada indicates that homelessness and the risk of becoming homeless are effecting a broader spectrum of people in more areas of the city than at any time since the Great Depression, and that while there is a definite economic basis to the problem, it cannot be explained by the prevailing economic situation alone. The Canadian city is a crucible in which urban change and conflict are manifest, but where they also can be resolved. Homelessnness, poverty and related deprivations are not fundamentally problems of the city. Rather, they are synergistic problems which exist in the city and are open to solution. To be effective however, solutions must involve a structured response by all three levels of government in co-operation with the combined efforts of the private sector and volu..tary organizations, and with continuing participation by the poor and homeless.

Measuring the extent of homelessness accurately is difficult because the number of homeless people changes constantly in response to such factors as national and regional economic policies, unemployment rates (chronic, temporary, seasonal and regional variations), availability and use of community social services, availability of low-rent housing, season of the year, climate, day of the month, incidence of poverty and hunger, and the enumeration methods employed. The precise number of homeless in Canada or in any one of the major cities at any given time depends on the definition chosen, and on the descriptive boundaries of selected social, economic and environmental factors. In addition, the homeless themselves are difficult to

enumerate, they have no fixed address and by definition move throughout the urban areas or between them; multiple enumeration of the same person is common; the homeless often resent the very act of counting. Recent experience has shown that those absolutely without shelter are few, those without a home are many, and those 'at risk' of losing or unable to sustain an affordable home are many many more. While the importance of reliable numbers and the need for more accurate measurement and valid statistical analysis is clearly recognized, this should not delay immediate, concerted action. The lack of absolute and accurate numbers cannot become an excuse for the lack of public or private initiatives to reduce homelessness. The issue is not so much establishing a grand numerical total (a highly suspect measure given the variable factors involved in this issue), as it is determining the causes and effects of the structural transformations which are occurring, and through the implementation of public policy at the appropriate levels, eliminating the incidence and the risk of homelessness. This seems particularly valid when research and analysis ought to form the basis for policy development and implementation.

Efforts are currently underway to provide reliable estimates of the number of absolute and 'at risk' homeless, and to develop more sensitive measurement techniques which may be productively applied to policy and programme development which will reflect the widely varying economic, social and geographic circumstances within the provincial jurisdictions. Meanwhile, the search for solutions is continuing.

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

The homeless are not hopeless, and the problems associated with homelessness can be resolved in Canada. Solutions to the shelter and related neighbourhood problems of the poor and disadvantaged require comprehensive and structured responses if they are to have a long-term impact. Shelter issues cannot be separated from the broader human settlements development issues, and neither set of issues can be separated from those of poverty and economic development. A comprehensive shelter strategy must encompass related economic, political, socio-cultural and design solutions. The responses must be based on a co-operative commitment by all levels of government, co-ordinated with the initiatives developed by non-governmental organizations and the homeless themselves, and designed to enable individuals and families to begin or to return to participate fully in Canada's prevailing society. Any lasting solution to homelessness requires a committed partnership combining the resources of the federal/provincial/municipal governments with the ability of private market investment, held together by the continued enthusiasm of volunteer and charitable institutions committed to improving local and regional living and housing conditions.

Specifically, resolving homelessness in Canada requires the concerted partnership of six groups:

(a) The homeless themselves, to identify needs, expectations and aspirations;

(b) the volunteer and local charitable organizations with extensive pioneer experience in providing shelter and temporary health and food services for the poor;

(c) private industry providing investment, contracting and building services;

(d) the municipalities and local governments who influence location and availability of land and buildings for housing projects, while being responsible for establishing norms and regulations through local by-laws and ordinances;

(e) the provinces and their agencies who have the Canadian constitutional jurisdiction for housing and social services. The provinces represent a major source of policy initiatives and the critical opportunity for co-ordinating the delivery of health and social services to the homeless in relation to shelter provision and appropriate accommodation;

(f) the federal government through its taxation power is able to raise and allocate appropriate resources to housing and social service programmes including social housing on a national basis.

Government response must be predicated on a systematic process whereby federal funds and local government support is co-ordinated with, and has as its foundation, the development and implementation of provincial public policies which reflect regional differences and jurisdiction. Such an integrated approach requires the provision of appropriate short term, medium range - transitional shelter and permanent housing in appropriate locations at a human scale, in conjunction with the provision of and ready access to locally available social and economic services. Access to and provision of

social and economic services involves financial support, social counselling and a process of aided self-help. It requires training and re-training to increase employment opportunities. It requires rehabilitation and prevention of sickness, disease, and substance abuse, to improve health and personal strength. It requires the rehabilitation of the whole person, able and willing to manage his or her own life and be responsible for his or her own needs and the needs of their respective families. Access to and provision of services alone will not help the homeless. Simply warehousing the poor in old or new buildings will not help either. Homelessness in 1987 will require an integrated and concerted attack involving public, private, and co-operative resources, building on the substantial success achieved by individual charitable and non-profit organizations in Canada's major cities.

Most efforts to address homelessness and urban poverty are currently in the hands of local organizations, especially volunteer and non-governmental agencies; since the problems occur at the community level, most of the initiatives to ameliorate the conditions have focussed on local strategies to compensate for inadequate shelter and income. They represent the first step toward providing long term solutions to chronic, structural problems. They are in effect <u>project</u> responses to immediate problems. To be truly effective, they need to be aggregated into broadly based <u>programme</u> responses by the level of government which has the power to develop and implement generic <u>policies</u> and the resources to implement selected strategies.

Representative examples from four of the largest urban centres in which the problems of homelessness are clearly manifest, illustrate the type of

projects designed to demonatrate the variety of solutions which are currently being tested in Canada.

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

310 Alexander Street: Quality Shelter and Aided Self-help Through Progressive Adaptation.

In Vancouver, many of the problems associated with homelessness are concentrated in the older downtown and eastside neighbourhoods, where older single men on welfare and the majority of World War II veterans who have chronic illnesses reside in Skid Row hotels and sleeping rooms when they are not sleeping 'under the stars'. Approximately 80% of the residents of the area receive some form of fixed income assistance or have incomes which are not keeping pace with the increases in the cost of living. Although it is considered by many to be a hard and unforgiving place, there is a strong sense of community in the area, and residents consider the local streets to be an extension of their living rooms. It is a milieu which is both home and a neighbourhood. A number of highly innovative initiatives have been designed for the long term residents of the downtown eastside, providing them with secure, affordable and quality accommodation enabling them to live with dignity in the area of their choice. The projects demonstrate many ingenious and user sensitive architectural and urban design features, which imaginatively overcome or compensate for many of the difficulties which prevail. New and converted buildings have been designed in harmony with existing structures. The obvious efforts to have new projects enhance the sense of community reflects the long term commitments and personal ideals of those who work with the poor and disadvantaged in this area.

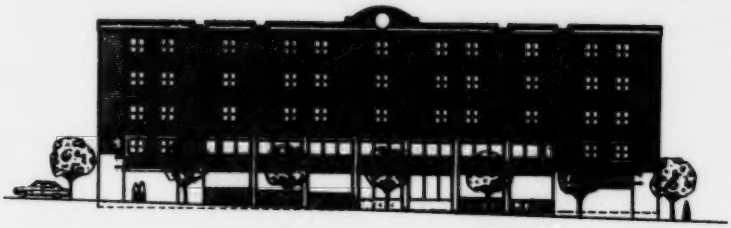
A new five storey building containing 134 units for World War II veterans

has recently opened for the long-term, hard to house residents of the area to enable them to regain choice and control over their housing, their environment, and ultimately their lives. At its core is a simple but vital concept: it is possible to humanize the life-space of marginalized people through a process of progressive adaptation, by combining physical shelter with aided social self-help and ready access to a range of essential support services. The five floors provide a reasonable upward progression of help and care from full dependence on staff (on the ground floor) to complete independence with private bathroom and kitchen for those who have learned to regain self management and health. 40 units on the first and part of the second floors are designed for residents who require some degree of physical or health assistance. These units (185 square feet net) contain a sink, a bed and basic furniture. The remaining units are designed with larger space and more facilities for those who are able to function with less supervision. These units range from those with a toilet and sink only, to a bath and kitchenette, and ultimately to fully self-contained facilities. Funding for the $4.5 million project comes from three sources. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provides assistance under the Non-Profit Rental Housing Program (approximately $324,000 per annum which is applied to reduce rental charges). Veterans' Affairs Canada has committed $50,000 annually over the next five years to cover additional service staffing costs. The City of Vancouver provided a write-down on the land lease to 75% of market value, thereby retaining public ownership and protecting against land speculation.

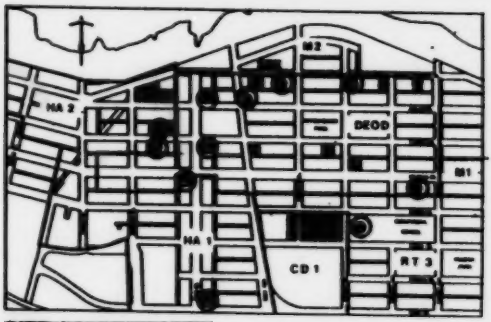
A significant aspect of the building's management is the conviction of the

staff that the residents require ready access to a variety of social and personal services all under one roof. The emphasis is on helping them to help themselves. Although there exists a built-in inspection system operated by the residents for the residents, the aim is not to enforce 'rehabilitation', but to facilitate, encourage and support whatever developments or improvements in lifestyle can occur. The attempt is "to put the paths where the people walk" by providing a safe and supportive environment that engenders self-respect.

The project exemplifies the stewardship underlying the process whereby experienced public and private organizations can work with the homeless where they choose to congregate, and reflects the importance of having a committed partnership between, in this case, the Federal and Municipal governments co-ordinating efforts with the private sector and voluntary groups. The Veteran's Memorial Housing project literally takes people off the street and provides them with the opportunity to put their lives back together in a supportive, sensitive environment. The building design includes a subsidized low cost public cafeteria for residents and the surrounding community identified as Club 44, reflecting the desire to maintain and strengthen long established community ties. It is intended that when veterans no longer require the units provided, they will become available to non-veteran homeless, and that ultimately, the success of this project approach can be replicated for other homeless and in other regions of Canada.



STREET ELEVATION



SITE LOCATION MAP

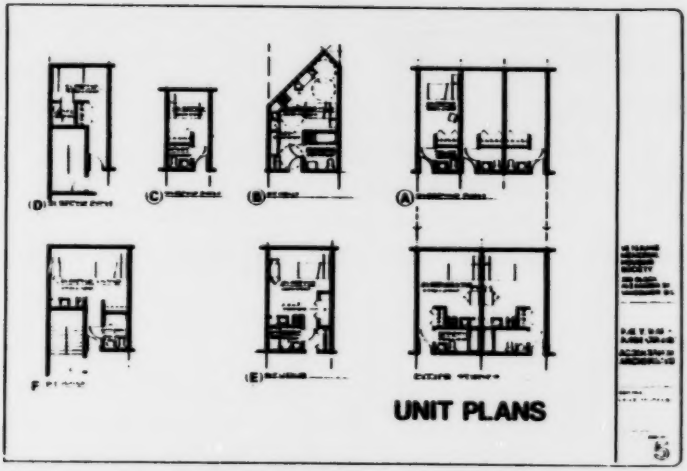
ZONES

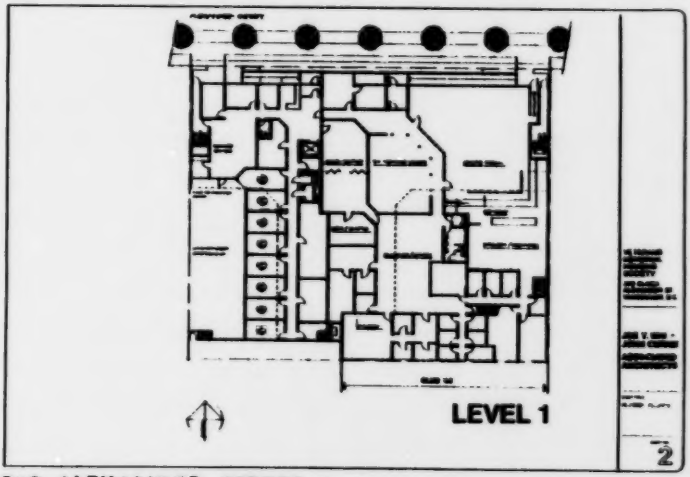
HA 1 CHINATOWN HISTORIC AREA
HA 2 GASTOWN HISTORIC AREA
CD 1 COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT
DEOD DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE
RT 3 TWO FAMILY DWELLING
M 1 INDUSTRIAL
M 2 INDUSTRIAL

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

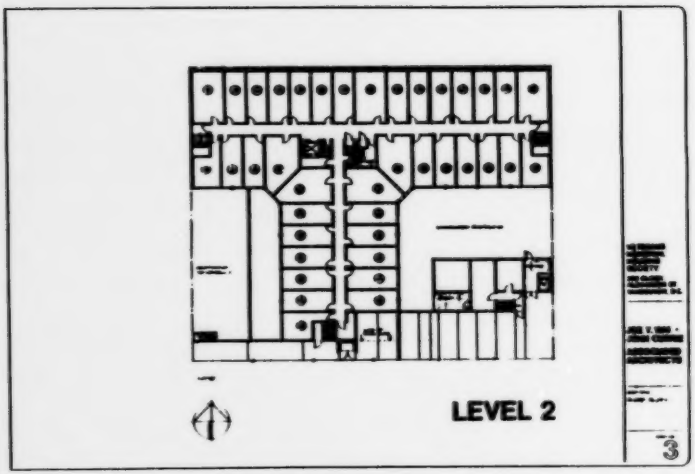
1 CARNEGIE LIBRARY
2 SALVATION ARMY
3 ST. JAMES SOCIAL SERVICES
4 THE LOOKOUT
5 MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES
6 TRIAGE
7 EXISTING 'CLUB 44'
8 POLICE STATION
9 STRATHCONA SCHOOL & COMMUNITY CENTRE

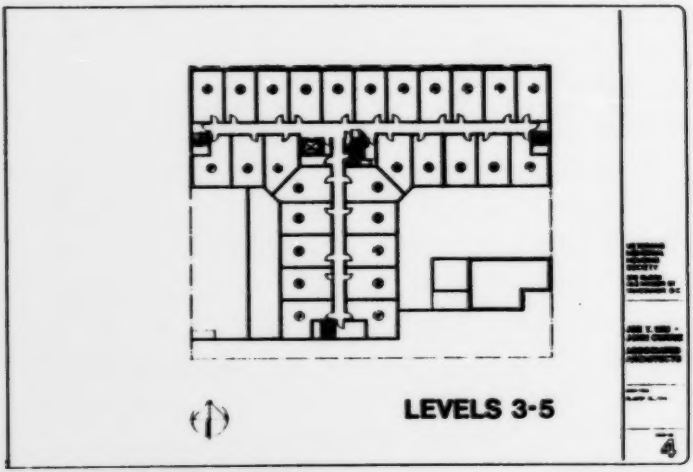
310 ALEXANDER STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C.





310 ALEXANDER STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C.





310 ALEXANDER STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C.

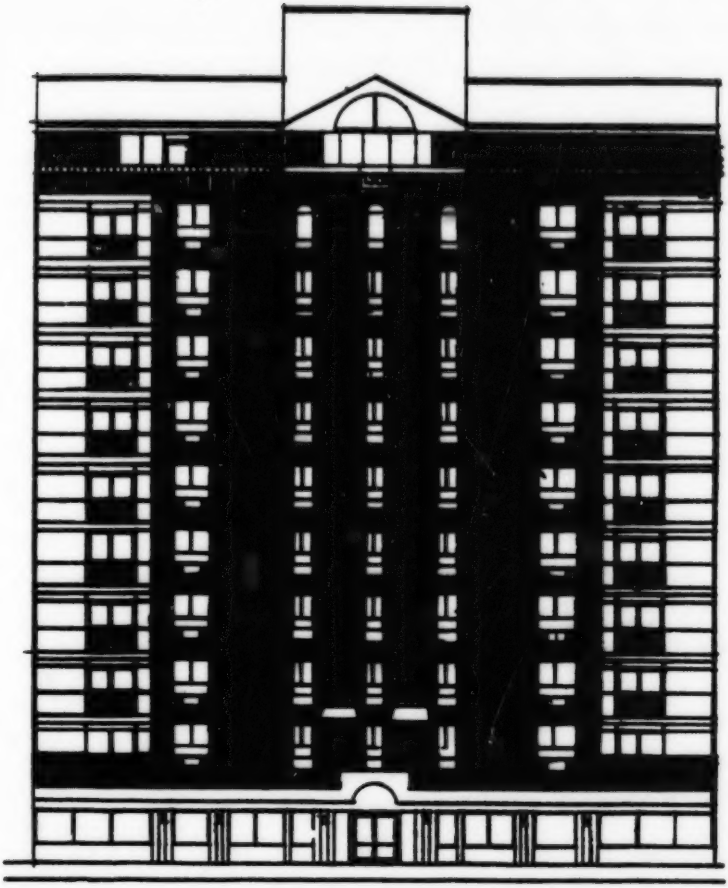
TORONTO, ONTARIO

90 Shuter Street: Security of Tenure for Low-Income Singles in a Rooming House Setting.

90 Shuter Street is a specially designed eleven storey apartment building in the downtown core based on the building form, management and social features of good rooming houses, to reverse the effects of inner city displacement. The clientele are the homeless who have been using emergency hostels as long-term housing and whose income is based on a variety of social assistance programmes which make it difficult for them to find and keep a home, and therefore stabilize their lives. In addition to quality, affordable housing, the residents have the support of community services provided both in the building and nearby. The design of the building provides maximum privacy, choice and the opportunity for groups and individuals to interact. Security of tenure, based on adequate resources is considered a necessary prerequisite for this type of permanent housing. The sponsors, the Homes First Society, is a community based charitable and non-profit organization which grew out of the experience of organizations providing and managing "public housing", and in meeting the needs of single persons displaced by urban redevelopment. Each of the 17 apartment units has four or five single rooms. These are large enough to be furnished as bed-sitters. A bed and dresser, built by residents of the complex, are provided. Each resident has private access to a bathroom which is shared with one other person. The rooms have individually controlled electric heat. The four or five rooms in each apartment share a kitchen and dining

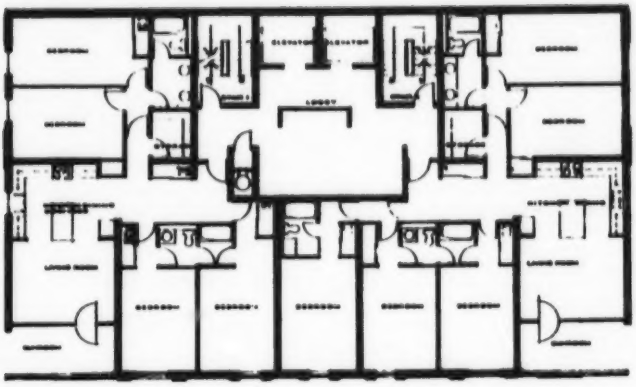
area, with an adjacent living room and sun room. The design is flexible and permits each group to tailor the spaces to their liking. The typical floors have been designed to accommodate people with certain types of handicaps (from fully featured handicapped facilities to minor adjustments). Each apartment has developed its own set of rules and expectations for behaviour, and the general building rules were developed with and by the residents. Shuter Street is close to public transportation, shopping, public recreation facilities and services which the residents are accustomed to using.

Funding for the project is diverse, and securing it has been problematic because of the question of jurisdictional responsibility concerning support housing in general and the nature of the client group in particular. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provided the capital and operating funds under the National Housing Act (Section 56.1) special purpose housing allocation. The mortgage interest is being subsidised down to 2% interest with a 35 year amortization. The Provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing provides funding under the Ontario Community Housing Assistance Programme which ensures affordable rents ($320 per month), and residents pay no more than 25% of their income in rent. The Provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services in conjunction with the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto cost-shares funding of on-site support staff through the Municipal Purchase of Counselling Programme under the General Welfare Assistance Act.

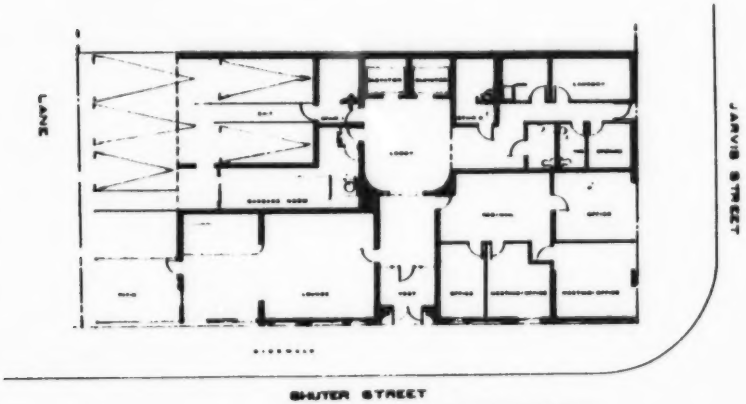


SOUTH ELEVATION

90 SHUTER STREET TORONTO, ONTARIO



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN
APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL



GROUND FLOOR PLAN
APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

90 SHUTER STREET TORONTO, ONTARIO

MONTREAL, QUEBEC

Auberge Communautairs du Sud-Ouest: Transitional Housing for Young People.

In the Province of Quebèc, homelessness among women and youth has become an increasing source of concern to both government and charitable organizations. Innovative shelter initiatives are currently underway to reduce the vulnerability of these groups. Their problems stem, in part, from a lack of emergency as well as permanent, secure housing, and also from a lack of social support services, to mitigate the effects of unemployment, domestic violence, abuse, and particularly support for those with alcohol or substance dependencies. Despite the fact that the number of public housing units in the province has doubled in the past six years, there are approximately 45,000 people on waiting lists (15,000 in Montreal alone).

In Quebec, a major dimension of homelessness in the large metropolitan areas concerns the lack of emergency and temporary shelter, particularly as the stock of low cost rooming houses has diminished by over 4,000 units in the past five years, and many units in boarding homes do not conform to municipal building codes.

Young people are increasingly at risk of becoming homeless because single people are not eligible for public housing units, and existing emergency shelters are not equipped to deal with the problems facing this group - problems which require long-term, structural solutions to address unemployment, poverty, education, health and continuing counselling.

The situation facing young people in Quebec, and an innovative shelter

initiative in southwest Montreal is described vividly by information provided by Quebec's provincial co-ordinator for IYSH activities, M. Claude Roy.

Depuis le début des années 80 le chômage devient un phénomène social de plus en plus inquiétant étant donné son ampleur et son aggravation presque constante: officiellement plus de 13% de la main d'oeuvre est à la recherche d'emplois au Québec. En chiffres absolus, cela veut dire qu'on compte plus de 400,000 chômeurs/euses au Québec. Les jeunes sont les plus touchés par le chômage; en juillet 1982 le taux de chômage parmi les 15-24 atteignant déjà 24%

Dans les quartiers du sud-ouest de Montréal soit St-Charles, St-Henri et Petite Bourgogne, on a émis 782 chèques d'aide sociale aux adultes de 18 à 30 ans aptes au travail dans le seul mois de mars 1983. Ces chiffres n'incluent pas: les assistés sociaux entre 18 et 30 ans possédant un certificat médical pour leur inaptitude au travail, les gens ignorant leurs droits à recevoir de l'aide sociale, les personnes qui, par fierté, refusent de s'y inscrire, les étudiants bénéficiaires de prêts et bourses et les chômeurs à faible revenu. La situation des jeunes adultes assistés sociaux est alarmante puisqu'ils reçoivent que $152.00 par mois. Une étude menée en mars 1984 par des nutritionnistes du Carrefour d'Education Populaire de Pointe St-Charles rapporte que les montants accordés par l'aide sociale ne permettent pas une alimentation saine. Selon cette recherche, il en coûte $125.00 par mois à un jeune adulte pour se nourrir, soit 84% de son revenu total. Ceci prouve bien que le jeune est confronté à un choix irréaliste; se loger ou se nourrir. Devant cette impasse, les jeunes arrondissent leur fin de mois par la vente de drogue, par la prostitution ou encore par du vol à l'étalage.

La mise en place de logements à prix modiques est une urgence pour ces adultes qui dépendent de leur famille ou de leurs amis pour se loger ou s'alimenter convenablement. Les personnes ne pouvant pas compter sur un de ces secours couchent dans des maisons d'hébergement ou dans les parcs. La dernière solution est la plus souvent utilisée puisqu'il n'y a que 72 lits sur toute l'Ile de Montréal pour accueillir ces personnes dans la rue. De plus, ces lits sont occupés à 30% par des gens du sud-ouest. D'après nous, ce taux est élevé compte tenu de l'éloignement de ces centres et du peu de ressources financières dont disposent les jeunes.

Face à ce problème, un groupe d'intervenants et de citoyens du quartier se rencontraient en février 1983 afin de réfléchir ensemble sur les avenues possibles dans lesquelles pourrait s'engager un regroupement éventuel de ces jeunes adultes de 18 à 30 ans.

La réponse fut unanime: l'idéal, ce serait que chaque jeune ait son appartement mais la situation critique des jeunes assistés sociaux oblige à envisager une solution communautaire du problème à moyen ou long terme.

Dès la fin de la saison estivale, le groupe entreprit la fondation du comité organisateur de ce qui s'appellera dorénavant l'Auberge Communautaire du Sud-Ouest Inc. suite à une incorporation provinciale obtenue au cours de l'été.

Auberge Communautaire du Sud-Ouest

L'Auberge se veut donc un lieu physique d'hébergement à moyen et à long terme pour les jeunes assistés sociaux des quartiers du sud-ouest de Montréal. Il ne s'agit plus d'un dépannage ponctuel mais bien de donner une véritable chance à des jeunes assistés sociaux de se "sortir du trou", leur offrant ainsi l'appui et le temps nécessaires afin d'améliorer leur situation. Après concertation, trois objectifs généraux soutendent notre action:

1. Améliorer la condition de vie du jeune en répondant à ses besoins premiers (hébergement, réponse à ses problèmes de revenu...);

2. favoriser une vie communautaire qui permette une prise en charge du jeune par le jeune en organisant collectivement la vie de l'Auberge, tout en intégrant à cette vie communautaire toutes les dimensions du vécu quotidien;

3. encourager le jeune à trouver individuellement et/ou collectivement des solutions permanentes à ses problèmes économiques, favorisant ainsi une pleine autonomie et un retour sur le marché du travail.

Afin de mieux définir ce que devra être l'Auberge concrètement et comment elle devra fonctionner, nous nous dotons d'une structure organisationnelle bien spécifique. La formule retenue préférablement est celle d'un immeuble unique pouvant offrir jusqu'à 22 unités individuelles d'habitation. Chaque chambre devra être de dimension suffisante pour permettre l'organisation de la vie privée de chaque jeune hébergé.

Ces vingt-deux (22) chambres individuelles sont regroupées en 3 unités appelées îlots; chaque îlot est autonome quant à son organisation interne et se compose de six à huit (6 à 8) chambres, d'une salle commune et d'une cuisine qui lui est propre.

De ces trois îlots, un premier servira d'unité d'accueil, lieu de passage obligatoire avant d'avoir accès au service d'hébergement à moyen et long terme. Cette unité d'accueil permettra de répondre, d'une part, au besoin d'un séjour à court terme et, d'autre part, servira de lieu d'adaptation à la vie communautaire.

Une fois le séjour à l'accueil terminé, le jeune pourra dès lors profiter du service d'hébergement à moyen et long terme, si sa situation "psycho-socio-économique" le nécessite. A l'intérieur des îlots, l'organisation de la vie communautaire sera plus autonome. Les membres organiseront entre eux leur quotidien: achats alimentaires, cuisine, ménage, budgétisation des achats, etc. De même, les règlements internes de l'îlot seront négociés en groupe. Tous les problèmes afférant à la vie communautaire seront discutés au cours de la réunion hebdomadaire de l'îlot avec l'aide de l'animateur. Rappelons enfin que chaque îlot aura son ou ses animateurs qui assumeront une présence et un suivi auprès des jeunes et ce, sur une base permanente (24 heures/jour, 7 jours/semaine).

Par ailleurs, chaque jeune résident qui s'engagera à l'intérieur de la structure de vie communautaire de l'Auberge devra respecter les règlements internes et le code de vie du centre. Ainsi, les résidents devront obligatoirement participer aux rencontres hebdomadaires de planification et d'évaluation. De plus, ils s'engageront 15 heures/semaine à travailler à leur revalorisation personnelle et sociale par le truchement d'une recherche intensive d'emploi et/ou d'un stage de formation; ils devront également participer à l'organisation et à la vie active de l'Auberge. Enfin, ils seront appelés à faire preuve d'une réelle volonté de s'en sortir, se dotant de tous les outils nécessaires leur permettant d'acquérir une plus grande autonomie personnelle.

Alors que le nombre de jeunes assistés sociaux, vivant sous le seuil de la pauvreté, n'en finit plus d'augmenter, alors que le niveau de chômage chez les jeunes adultes atteint des plafonds encore inégalés, alors que le phénomène de la prostitution et de la clochardisation chez les 18-30 ans prend de plus en plus d'ampleur, nous demeurons viscéralement convaincus de la pertinence et de l'urgence d'instaurer un centre d'hébergement et d'entraide pour ces milliers de jeunes adultes laissés pour compte.

De part le caractère innovateur de notre projet (hébergement à moyen et long terme pour jeunes adultes de quartiers populaires), nous espérons pouvoir recueillir les sommes suffisantes nous permettant de faire un pas vers le mieux-être des jeunes adultes présentement découragés devant le peu d'alternatives que leur offrent le marché du travail et le contexte social actuel.

S'en sortir?

L'équipe aura également une responsabilité énorme vis-à-vis la nécessité que chaque membre se prenne en main et rebâtisse sa situation personnelle afin de quitter l'auberge dans une meilleure posture qu'à son arrivée.

Il faut insister sur le fait que si l'auberge est une ressource à long terme, elle ne doit pas être considérée comme une ressource permanente et chaque membre doit se servir de ce temps de passage pour améliorer sa situation personnelle et se prendre en main à l'extérieur de l'auberge.

OTTAWA, ONTARIO

506 Bronson: Municipally Provided Affordable Housing at a Human Scale in a Prime Location.

Low income single persons and childless couples in Ontario are not eligible for federal or provincial government housing assistance at a time when the traditional stock of low-income rooming houses has declined by over 80 percent in the last ten years. People using the available emergency shelters are increasingly becoming chronically homeless, moving within and between rooming houses and shelters. There are increasingly more younger women and men trapped in a revolving door of poverty and insecure, inaffordable shelter alternatives. In response, the city of Ottawa Non-Profit Housing Corporation (City Living), has begun to create a designed rooming house stock to replace what has been lost in the market. Since its incorporation, City Living has grown from a Municipal Housing Company which managed just over 1,500 units for families and seniors to one of the largest non-profit housing corporations in Canada. At the end of 1985, its portfolio consisted of more than 3,200 units. The varied federal and provincial government programmes which City Living has utilized over the years, as well as the City of Ottawa's independent housing initiatives, have resulted in the provision of a wide range of building types, sizes of units and rental levels to accommodate the needs of low and moderate income households, although the local demand for affordable rental housing remains high.

The Bronson Avenue Rooming House (Maison de Chambres) is the first new rooming house constructed by City Living. It is located in a prime location

within Dalhousie Ward with amenities and support services within walking distance or a short bus ride.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provided funding under the Canada Rental Supply Program with a grant for a 15 year interest free loan of $391,020 for the construction of the project. The loan was contingent on the City of Ottawa contribuuting at least 20% of the total capital costs ($662,400). The total cost of the project at completion is approximately $1,200,000. The project was planned to operate on a roughly break-even basis with rents averaging $205 per month.

The rooming house contains 55 rooms with a one-bedroom unit for a resident superintendent. Each unit is furnished and equipped with kitchenette facilities. There is a common room, laundry facility, common bathrooms and storage areas for the residents. A recreational programme has been established partially in response to tenant requests and with the assistance of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa-Carleton Branch, which if successfull, will lead to the introduction of a life/social skills programme for residents and educational workshops for caretaking staff.

Policy guidelines for the operation of City Living rooming houses are based on the following objectives:

- to maintain a supply of affordable housing for low income single persons in the city;

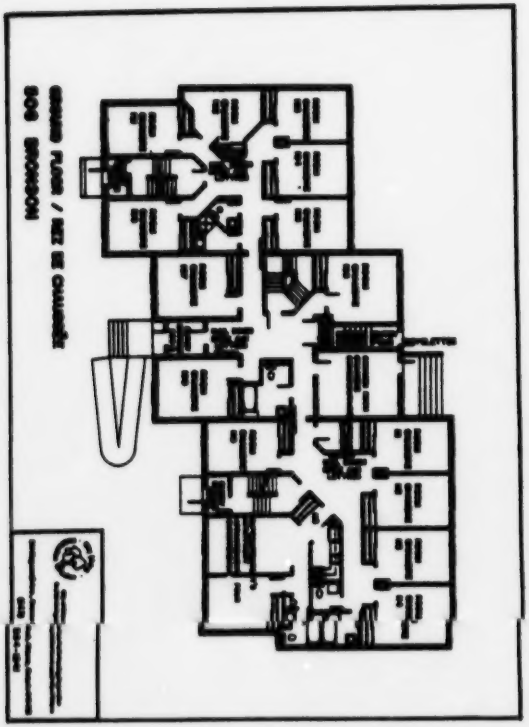
- to ensure that City Living rooming houses meet sound property management standards;

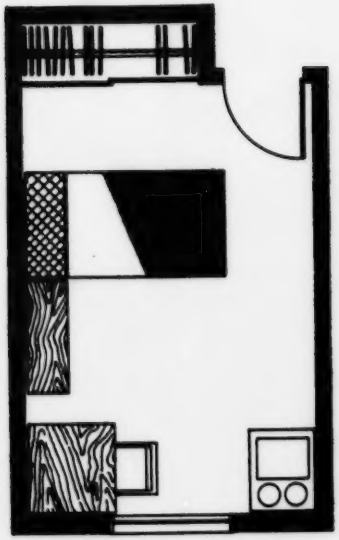
- to maintain a healthy and secure living environment;

- to maintain a liaison with the neighbourhood and community support services for purposes of consultation and referral.

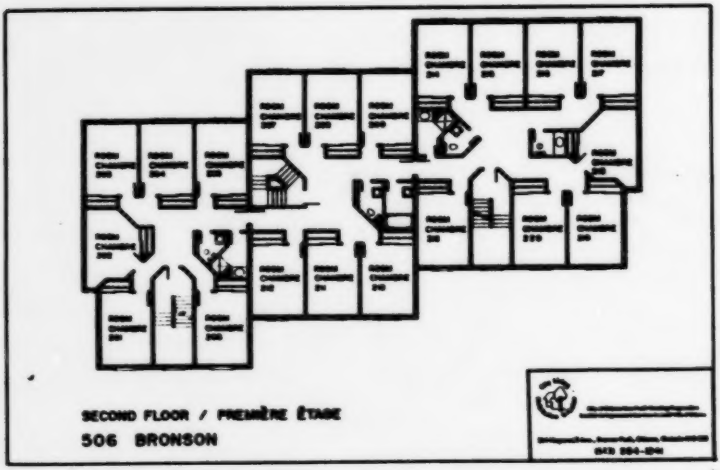
The target groups to be housed are: low-income singles, under 50 years of age, including transient men and women, marginally employed (students are considered low priority), with preference given to applicants who are permanent residents of Ottawa. The residents must be self-sufficient and capable of taking care of themselves. Additional selection criteria include: capacity to share close living quarters with other residents, must be at least 18 years of age, and proof of income or verification of direct payment of rent is required at the time of renting. The Maison de Chambres demonstrates the success of providing affordable, quality accommodation at a human scale, in an appropriate location, through local government initiative.

MAISON DE CHAMBRES
506 BRONSON
ROOMING HOUSE

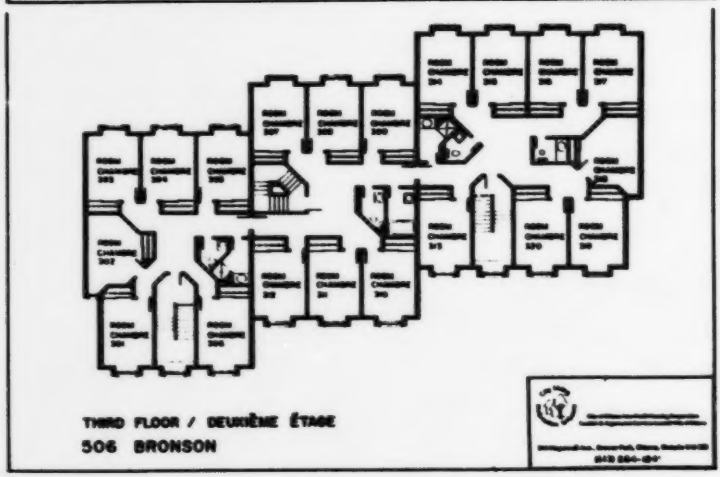




TYPICAL ROOM LAYOUT
PLAN D'UNE CHAMBRE



SECOND FLOOR / PREMIÈRE ÉTAGE
506 BRONSON



THIRD FLOOR / DEUXIÈME ÉTAGE
506 BRONSON

Homelessness will only be removed by restoring the individual or the family affected to an active and full participation in the mainstream of Canada's urban society. Self respect coupled with marketable skills and urgent crisis support based on selected continuing assistance including health and education, ought to return individuals and families to Canada's prevailing mainstream to participate fully in the market economy. To date, varied experience has shown that most individuals and families considered homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, can look after themselves and their needs, and once again become self-reliant and effective members of Canada's urban society, given a chance to orient their life, learn new skills and attitudes, and being helped over an economic or social crisis; this will result in the restoration of self-confidence.

Homelessness is not hopeless and the pervasive phenomenon of the homeless can be resolved in Canada through a partnership of initiative involving governments, voluntary agencies and the homeless themselves, providing shelter and homes together with ready access to social and economic services to return the individual and family to a productive role in an urban society.